

Creating a Jazz Discography - The Commercial Recordings of Jo Stafford The Capitol Years

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Timeline of Jo Stafford's Career

Stafford joined The Pied Pipers in the late 30s. After a brief stint in New York, the group returned to Los Angeles where they were hired by Tommy Dorsey's big band.



In 1947, backstage at the Capitol Theatre in New York. Left to Right: Tommy Dorsey, Frank Sinatra, Jo Stafford.



The Pied Pipers. From top to bottom: John Huddleston, Chuck Lowry, Jo Stafford, Billy Wilson.

Jo Stafford (1917-2008) was an American pop and jazz singer.

In 1943, the Pied Pipers signed a contract with Capitol Records. In 1944, Stafford left the Pied Pipers to pursue a solo career.

Her greatest commercial success was in the early 1950s with hit singles "Jambalaya", "Shrimp Boats", "Make Love to Me", and "You Belong to Me".



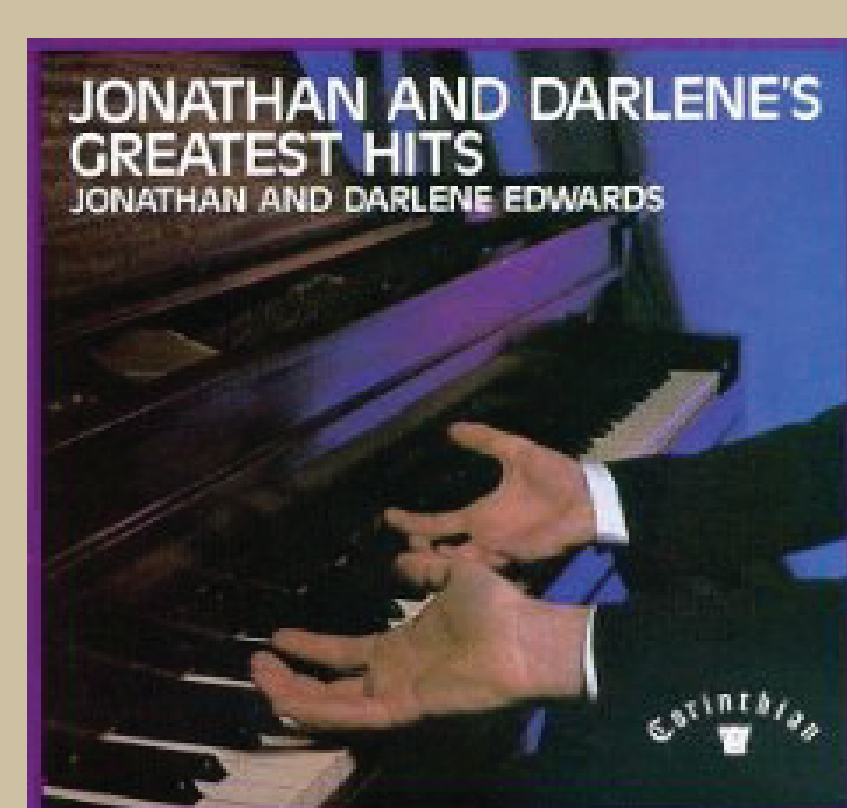
Starting in 1944, Stafford hosted the Tuesday and Thursday broadcasts of The Chesterfield Supper Club, a NBC musical variety radio program.

In the 1950s, she and her husband created a humorous version of a bad lounge act, which they recorded under the personas of Darlene and Jonathan Edwards.



Stafford enjoyed international success with her hit song "You Belong to Me" hitting #1 on the UK charts and releases of her albums in the UK, Germany, and Japan.

In 1961, she won a Grammy for Best Comedy Album for the album *Jonathan and Darlene Edwards in Paris*.



As Darlene and Jonathan, Stafford and Weston created the first commercially successful musical parody albums.

Shortly after her success as Darlene Edwards, Stafford chose to curtail her career in order to focus on her family. In 2008, at the age of 90, Stafford died of congestive heart failure.

Research Objective

- Build an accurate and detailed discography of Stafford's recordings for Capitol Records.

This project serves to affirm Stafford's significant, but underappreciated, contribution to American jazz. This research will eventually serve as a component of a larger monograph documenting and contextualizing Stafford's life and art in American popular music.



Above and below: Two photos for Life magazine in 1950. Stafford at the piano with husband Paul Weston.



The Capitol Record Tower in Hollywood, California

- Stafford's career remains fairly undocumented in scholarly sources.
- Because few secondary sources exist, I originally searched for primary sources.

I contacted Capitol Records hoping they would be willing to grant me access to their discographical archives. I was unable to find someone who knew what the archive was or how to access it. Due to budget concerns, it is possible that no archivist or librarians are on staff to deal with this sort of request.

Research Process

Results

Because of the difficulties in accessing primary sources, I instead used Michel Ruppli's *The Capitol Label Discography*. This discography details all the recordings made for Capitol and subsidiary labels between 1942 and 1986. My job was to extract all the material relating to Stafford and organize it in a separate discography.

In my research, I also found *V-Discs: A History and Discography* by Richard Sears. V-Disc was a record label that sent music to troops stationed abroad during WWII. From this source, I was able to compile another discography about Stafford's recordings for the war effort.



Many famous stars recorded V-Discs, such as Bing Crosby, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and the Andrews sisters.